

Wiley Branton and Jack Greenberg and Oliver Hill, the legacy of others we have lost, like that great lion, Leon Higginbotham, our friend—that legacy can be seen every day, everywhere in America, in classrooms, in libraries, in restaurants, and in the lives and careers of so many of the men and women standing here tonight.

Because the road to freedom and justice is long and never ends, we can honor Thurgood Marshall best not only with grand buildings and museum exhibits but with great vision and vigorous action, to make equality ever more real and discrimination that some day will be something that can only be found in museum exhibits. No one should be denied a home or a job, a world-class education or equal pay for equal work or, indeed, any part of the American dream, because of race or disability or gender or sexual orientation or religion.

During some of the darkest days of Jim Crow, a single phrase whispered in African-American communities all across the South would give hope to millions: “Thurgood is coming.” Today, at the dawn of a new century, it is up to each and every one of us to ensure that Thurgood is still coming.

So let us pick up his sword and his shield and fight for that more perfect Union, that one America that was his great and lasting gift to all of us.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:15 p.m. in the atrium at the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building. In his remarks, he referred to Judge Damon J. Keith, U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit; Justice Marshall’s widow, Cecilia Marshall; Rosa Parks, civil rights activist; Oliver Hill, attorney who worked with Justice Marshall while at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund; H. Patrick Swygert, president, Howard University; and Irvin D. Reid, president, Wayne State University.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast

February 4, 1999

Thank you very much, Steve. Distinguished head table guests; to the leaders from around the world who are here; the Members of Congress, Mr. Speaker and others; ladies and gentlemen.

You know, I feel exactly the way I did the first time I ever gave a speech as a public official to the Pine Bluff Rotary Club officers installation banquet in January of 1977. The dinner started at 6:30. There were 500 people there; all but three were introduced; they went home mad. [Laughter] We’d been there since 6:30. I was introduced at a quarter til ten. The guy that introduced me was so nervous he didn’t know what to do and, so help me, the first words out of his mouth were, “You know, we could stop here and have had a very nice evening.” [Laughter] He didn’t mean it the way it sounded, but I do mean it. We could stop here and have had a very wonderful breakfast. You were magnificent, Max. Thank you very much.

I did want to assure you that one of the things that has been said here today, repeatedly, is absolutely true. Senator Hutchison was talking about when we come here, we set party aside, and there is absolutely no politics in this. I can tell you that is absolutely so. I have had a terrific relationship with Steve Largent, and he has yet to vote with me the first time. [Laughter] So I know there is no politics in the prayer breakfast. [Laughter]

We come here every year—Hillary and I were staying up kind of late last night talking about what we should say today, who would be here. I think, especially in light of what Max Lucado has just said, I would like to ask you to think about what he said, in terms of the world we live in, for it is easier to talk about, than to do, this idea of making peace with those who are different from us.

We have certain signs of hope, of course. Last Good Friday, in Northern Ireland, the Irish Protestants and the Irish Catholics set aside literally centuries of distrust and chose peace for their children. Last October, at the Wye Plantation in Maryland, Chairman Arafat, Abu Mazen, and the Palestinian delegation, and Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli delegation went through literally sleepless nights to try to save the peace process in the Middle East and put it back on track.

Throughout this year, our allies and we have worked to deepen the peace of Bosnia—and we’re delighted to have the leader of the Republika Srpska here today—and

we're working today to avoid a new catastrophe in Kosovo, with some hopeful signs. We also have worked to guarantee religious freedom to those who disagree with all of us in this room, recognizing that so much of the trouble in the world is rooted in what we believe are the instructions we get from God to do things to people who are different from us. And we think the only answer is to promote religious freedom at home and around the world. I want to thank all of you who helped us to pass the Religious Freedom Act of 1998. I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to Dr. Robert Seiple, the former head of World Vision, who is here with us today, who is now America's Ambassador-at-Large for international religious freedom. Later this month I have to appoint three members to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. The Congress has already nominated its members; we know that's a part of it. But respectfully, I would suggest it's not enough.

As we pray for peace, as we listen to what Max said, we say, "Well, of course, it is God's will." But the truth is, throughout history people have prayed to God to aid them in war. People have claimed repeatedly that it was God's will that they prevail in conflict. Christians have done it at least since the time of the Crusades. Jews have done it since the times of the Old Testament. Muslims have done it from the time of the Essene down to the present day. No faith is blameless in saying that they have taken up arms against others of other faiths, other races, because it was God's will that they do so.

And nearly everybody would agree that from time to time that happens, over the long course of history. I do believe that even though Adolf Hitler preached a perverted form of Christianity, God did not want him to prevail. But I also know that when we take up arms or words against one another, we must be very careful in invoking the name of our Lord.

Abraham Lincoln once said that in the great Civil War, neither side wanted war, and both sides prayed to the same God. But one side would make war, rather than stay in the Union, and the other side would accept war, rather than let it be rent asunder. So the war came. In other words, our great President

understood that the Almighty has His own designs, and all we can do is pray to know God's will.

What's that got to do with us? Martin Luther King once said we had to be careful taking vengeance in the name of God, because the old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind.

And so, today, in the spirit in which we have truly been ministered to today, I ask you to pray for peace in the Middle East; in Bosnia and Kosovo; in Northern Ireland, where there are new difficulties. I ask you to pray that the young leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea will find a way to avoid war. I ask you to pray for a resolution of the conflicts between India and Pakistan. I ask you to pray for the success of the peace process in Colombia, for the agreement made by the leaders of Ecuador and Peru, for the ongoing struggles to make the peace process work in Guatemala. I ask you to pray for peace.

I ask you to pray for the peacemakers, for the Prime Minister of Albania, who is here, for the Prime Minister of Macedonia. Their region is deeply troubled. I ask you to pray for Chairman Arafat and the Palestinians; for the Government of Israel; for Mrs. Leah Rabin and her children, who are here, for the awful price they have paid in the loss of Prime Minister Rabin for the cause of peace. I ask you to pray for our King Hussein, a wonderful human being, a champion of peace who, I promise you today, is fighting for his life mostly—mostly—so he can continue to fight for peace.

And finally, I ask you to pray for all of us, including yourself, to pray that our purpose truly will reflect God's will, to pray that we can all be purged of the temptation to pretend that our willfulness is somehow equal to God's will, to remember that all the great peacemakers in the world, in the end, have to let go and walk away, like Christ, not from apparent but from genuine grievances.

If Nelson Mandela can walk away from 28 years of oppression in a little prison cell, we can walk away from whatever is bothering us. If Leah Rabin and her family can continue their struggle for peace after the Prime Minister's assassination, then we can continue to believe in our better selves.

I remember on September 19th, 1993, when the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority gathered in Washington to sign the peace accord, the great question arose about whether, in front of a billion people on international television, for the very first time, Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin would shake hands. Now, this may seem like a little thing to you, but Yitzhak Rabin and I were sitting in my office talking, and he said, "You know, Mr. President, I have been fighting this man for 30 years. I have buried a lot of people. This is difficult." And I started to make an argument, and before I could say anything, he said, "But you do not make peace with your friends." And so the handshake occurred that was seen around the world.

Then, a little while afterward—some time passed—they came back to Washington, and they were going to sign these agreements about what the details were of handing over Gaza and parts of the West Bank. And the two of them had to sign, on this second signing, three copies of these huge maps, books of maps. There were 27 maps—you remember—27 maps. There were literally thousands of markings on these maps, on each page—what would happen at every little crossroad, who would be in charge, who would do this, who would do that, who would do the other thing. And right before the ceremony there was a hitch, and some jurisdictional issue was not resolved. And everybody was going around in a tizzy. And I opened the door to the little back room where the Vice President and I have lunch once a week, and I said to these two people, who shook hands for the first time not so long ago, "Why don't you guys go in this room and work this out. This is not a big deal." Thirty minutes later they came out. No one else was in there. They worked it out. They signed the copies 3 times, 27 pieces each, each page they were signing. And it was over.

You do not make peace with your friends, but friendship can come with time and trust and humility when we do not pretend that our willfulness is an expression of God's will.

I do not know how to put this into words. A friend of mine last week sent me a little story out of Mother Teresa's life when she said she was asked, "When you pray, what

do you say to God?" And she said, "I don't say anything. I listen." And then she was asked, "Well when you listen, what does God say to you?" And she said, "He doesn't say anything, either. He listens." [Laughter]

In another way, St. Paul said the same thing: "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit, Himself, intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."

So I ask you to reflect on all we have seen and heard and felt today. I ask you to pray for peace, for the peacemakers, and for peace within each of our hearts—in silence.

Amen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:26 a.m. in the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Steve Largent, master of ceremonies; Rev. Max Lucado, pastor, Oak Hills Church of Christ, San Antonio, TX; Yasser Arafat, Chairman, and Abu Mazen, Secretary General of the Executive Committee, Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Prime Minister Milorad Dodik of the Republica Srpska; Prime Minister Pandeli Majko of Albania; Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Leah Rabin, wife of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; and King Hussein I of Jordan.

Remarks on Presenting the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards February 4, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. I must say I always love coming to this; this is the fifth time I have participated in the Baldrige Awards in the 6 years I have—this is the seventh year of my Presidency—I've done this five times. And I like it because this group is always so restrained, laid back, unexpressive, you know. [Laughter] Amazing.

I want to thank Secretary Daley for his truly outstanding service. And this is the first time he's told me he intended to stay the whole 2 years; I appreciate that. [Laughter]

I want to thank Roger Ackerman, who is genuinely devoted to the Baldrige Awards. And I thank all of those who are responsible for the program. We're glad to have Tish Baldrige here today. I thank Barry Rogstad, Bob Jones, Ernie Deavenport. I thank the